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U.S. Army Completes Test of Key Infantry Capabilities

White Sands, NM – July 10, 2010 – The U.S. Army's Program Executive Office Integration announced today that key networked capabilties which will support the Army's Infantry Brigade Combat Teams have moved out of their first series of critical technology assesment tests. During the 30 day test cycle, termed Technical Tests, the program conducted a series of high-tech network and equipment verification evaluations at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. Army engineers, industry partners and product developers supported by Soldiers of the Army Evaluation Task Force (AETF) conducted the Technical Tests on various performance aspects of unmanned ground and aerial vehicles, two types of unattended ground sensors and the Network Integration Kit (NIK) which recives and passes sensor data from the unmanned systems to the Soldier.

This year's testing, year three of an overall four-year test process, incorporates enhanced data collection methods, production representative equipment, and improved and expanded operationally relevant test ranges. "The tests continue to grow in complexity and density," COL John Wendel, Project Manager IBCT said. "Our systems are covering vastly expanded terrain as a result of significantly enhanced range performance of the JTRS Ground Mobile Radios."

The Techical Tests are measured tests that quantify the maturity and capability of the Army's latest hardware and software enhancements. The test period that culminated July 1 included both day and night tests in a robust operational environment, encompassing both caves and mountainous terrain that was designed to replicate similar features in Afghanistan.

The capabilities tested, called Increment 1, include the Small Unmanned Ground Vehicle, Class I Unmanned Air Vehicle, Unattended Ground Sensors and the Network Integration Kit. These capabilities make up an important part of the Army's Capability Package construct, which aims to field groups of key materiel and non-materiel solutions on a two-year basis in order to support deploying Brigade Combat Teams with the latest relevant capabilties.

Data gathered from the Technical Tests will factor into network and product development improvements as the Army moves toward the final stages of evaluations. In September, Soldiers of the AETF will complete a full-scale military exercise to test and evaluate Increment 1 during the Force Development Testing and Experimentation (FDT&E) and the final stage, the Limited User Test (LUT). The LUT is a soldier-driven independent review of maturity, readiness and functionality. A sucessful LUT will pave the way for additional low rate production of Increment 1 equipment.

The 2010 Increment 1 testing focuses Network enhancements and hardware fixes to enhance connectivity between soldiers – ultimately providing increased Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capabilities, as well as increased survivability and lethality. Many of the reliability, maintainability and durability issues identified during the 2009 LUT have been addressed and the testing and evaluation methods have been updated – by LUT 2010, the Army will have rectified 100 percent of fixes from the previous year.

"By utilizing an integrate-test-fix strategy the Army is not only addressing incident reports and enhancing capability, it is ensuring that fixes are made before the soldier is issued the equipment in the field. So far, we've seen encouraging results in the 2010 test cycle" said Wendel.

The 2011 Initial Operational Test and Evaluation marks the last evaluation of Increment 1 capabilities. If sucessful, Increment 1 will enter full rate production and will be deployed to Afghanistan with the 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division in 2012.